

CATHOLIC LEADERS SPEAK AGAINST DEATH PENALTY

June 24, 1997 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) -

Catholic bishops in America used the occasion of Timothy McVeigh's death sentence to speak out against capital punishment. McVeigh was convicted of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing which killed 168 people.

Bishop William Skylstad (Spokane, Washington) of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops argued against the death sentence for McVeigh, saying, "Compassion and mercy are a tremendously creative act" (Associated Press, June 8, 1997). Skylstad acknowledged that a large majority of Americans favor capital punishment, but he said that "we as bishops feel there is a need to continue to sensitize our people to the reverence for life." Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput said: "Killing the guilty is still wrong. It does not honor the dead. It does not ennoble the living."

The Bible plainly says that the man who takes a life is to forfeit his own life. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. 9:6). Some think it is barbaric to deal in this way with serious crime. On the contrary. It is barbaric to allow wickedness to go unpunished. When severe justice is not meted out to capital offenders, evil spreads like leaven throughout society. The wicked become increasingly brazen. Fear of God diminishes. God is not only a God of love, but a God of holiness and justice. The Bible speaks of the deterrent factor of capital punishment: Deut. 13:11; 17:7,13; 19:20; 21:21; Rom. 13:3,4. The Bible also says that only by taking the life of the murderer can the stain of murder be cleansed from the land (Num. 35:31-34; Deut. 19:13).